THE

CASE OF THE AUTHORS

AS REGARDS

THE PAPER DUTY.

BY CHARLES KNIGHT,

AUTHOR OF 'THE STRUGGLES OF A BOOK AGAINST EXCESSIVE TAXATION.'

"It is the unavoidable misfortune of all great instruments of power—and that of Printing is one of the greatest—that they may be abused, as well as used. Fortunately, in the case of the Printing-press, the more its wholesome employment is extended, the more will its detrimental exercise be restricted."

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&c. &c.

The Excise Duty of Threehalfpence per pound and 5 per cent. upon Paper is a Tax upon a Material of Manufacture—that of Books.

The Commerce of Books is peculiarly a Commerce

ERRATUM.

In the Table at p. 8 the number of sheets in Macaulay's History is erroneously given as 72, instead of 88. The Duty payable upon that work would therefore be 930*l.*, and the rate $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

A printer's types are, in all but exceptional cases, required to be kept in circulation—to be employed in producing successive sheets of one book, and perhaps of several books proceeding at the same time in the same type.

The necessity then arises, in an early stage of the process, for determining the number of Copies to be printed.

At this stage to completion, and consequent sale, the State requires an advance in the shape of Tax. It does not, as in nearly all other cases, require payment of the Tax when the work goes out of the Warehouse for Sale—it does not allow the product to be bonded. Payment must be made upon the entire quantity produced upon speculation, whether it ultimately sell, or all the mental

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The Commerce of Books is peculiarly a Commerce of Risk. It is impossible, in the majority of cases, to predicate the amount of the demand.

The Risk is created by the necessity of a large expenditure of Capital before a single Copy of a Book can be produced.

The first expenditure is that of the Authorship—the mental production of one Copy, from which all other Copies are to be made.

The second expenditure is that of setting up the types—the material production of one Copy, from which all other Copies are to be made.

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and physical labour added to the cost of the taxed paper be utterly thrown away.

Now this Tax is, like all other taxes upon a material of manufacture, a Tax upon Profits, operating with peculiar and exclusive hardship in having no reference whatever to the exchange of the commodity between the producer and the consumer.

But in many cases it operates most especially as a hardship upon the first producer—the Author: it diminishes his profits in an unexampled degree, or it forbids his employment altogether.

All Literature is tending to cheapness—that is, all Literature is gradually seeking its remuneration in a large demand at low prices instead of a small demand at high prices. The time is past—it has not long passed—when literature was considered as a luxury, to be supported by luxurious prices. That time will never return. A Macaulay may sell 35,000 copies of a History at the old rate of dearness—but "one swallow does not make a summer." The misfortunes of Abbotsford were retrieved by cheapness, and not by exclusiveness. I am free to admit that the system of cheapness in books has been carried further than I ever contemplated it could be carried. It is carried beyond the point where it is compatible with the payment of the best literary labour, with a very few exceptions. The market for literary labour is therefore narrowed to an extent that we have never before seen. Hasty and inaccurate translations from the French—curtailed reprints from American copyrights—supply the demand by an uncritical public—idlers at watering-places and railway travellers—for something that may amuse the passing hour. Worse than this, the young are misled, and the licentious gratified, by ignorant and coarse penny sheets, whose "name is legion." And yet the number of diligent and thoughtful readers is increased a hundred-fold. No one now believes, or affects to believe, that the quality of popular

literature must necessarily be low. It has only necessarily ceased to be conventional. There cannot be again a Class Literature. With the craving for extreme cheapness amidst the great body of book-buyers,—and with the growing appreciation of what is really excellent in literature—of what is clear, condensed, imaginative, earnest, benevolent,—what prevents us having the noblest popular Literature in the world?—The inroads upon the Labour-Fund out of which the best authorship is to be supported. The State, which exacts a Paper Duty, and thus robs the Capital which would otherwise go to the remuneration of Literary Industry, is the Power which denies the popular writer his maintenance, or abridges his profits and limits his fame.

This is the Case which I desire to set forth. I wish to show—

1. That the Tax presses most unequally upon the Fund for the remuneration of those who are labouring for the instruction and amusement of the People.
2. That this Tax, which in its effects upon Cheap Literature is excessive, operates against the extension of the best English authorship, and interferes with the improvement of all the productions of the Press.
3. That it diminishes the Author's Profits to the lowest point; and substitutes for useful English works invasions of Foreign Copyrights—or encourages the production of inferior and injurious works by unskilled labourers in literature.

1. *That the Tax presses most unequally upon the Fund for the remuneration of those who are labouring for the instruction and amusement of the People.*

One of the fallacies which I have had the misfortune to hear enunciated even in the House of Commons is

this :—That the Paper Duty enters in so small a degree into the retail cost of a single volume, that its removal would not benefit the consumer. The fallacy assumes this shape:—An octavo volume weighs two pounds; the Paper Duty is about threepence. In point of fact, then, no reduction would be made at all: the remission would be a mere gratuity to the Publisher. I will grant all this, if desired, as far as regards the Circulating Library Octavo Volume. But do Political Economists and Financial Ministers require to be told, even with reference to the case of high-priced books, that the mischief of a Tax is not to be measured by the simple subtraction of the amount of the Tax from the retail cost of a single article, into the price of which the Tax had entered? The operation of every Tax is always much higher to the consumer than the amount paid into the Treasury; although upon this point I have urged nothing in the calculations upon which I have entered. What I reply to the legislative argument is this: the evil tells most oppressively upon books that are calculated for a large circulation at a cheap price, but which require the employment of the best literary ability for their production. The Paper Duty, says the apologist for its existence, is so minute as to be beneath a legislative notice: it is only about threepence upon a twelve shilling octavo volume, which is sold wholesale at eight shillings—about 3 per cent. If the twelve shilling octavo volumes only paid the Tax, the State might fairly hold the imposition to be contemptible, and abolish it for its minuteness; but looking at its operation upon Cheap Literature, it is the most excessive Tax ever imposed upon a material of manufacture in the worst days of fiscal ignorance. At the rate at which works of large popular circulation must be sold—such works as 'Household Words,' 'Chambers' Journal,' 'Chambers' Papers,' 'National Cyclopædia,' and several others that are keeping up the wholesome instruction of the masses, and which pay largely for authorship—from

100 to 150 closely-printed pages, using, upon an average, 10 sheets of paper of the size known as demy, or equivalent to that size, must be sold for a shilling retail, and eightpence wholesale. For eight shillings, 120 sheets must be produced, weighing, upon an average, 6 lbs. The positive duty is therefore ninepence halfpenny upon this raw material, which, in reference to the subsequent labour bestowed upon it, stands in the relation to a book which a piece of clay bears to a plate, or a knot of flax to a linen shirt. It averages 10 per cent. upon the raw material as compared with the perfected product.* It is more than 20 per cent. upon the material itself. The duty of 5–16ths of a penny upon raw cotton was abolished because it affected a staple manufacture. No legislator asked how much a yard of calico would be affected in price by this abolition. The duty, as compared with the pound of yarn, was about $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.—the yarn being the first stage of the working of the raw material. But when the pound of yarn was worked into the most beautiful printed cottons, but still cheap, the duty was almost nominal. Is this the case with the mental and physical labour expended upon the good and cheap books?

But I have to show that this Tax of 10 per cent. upon the raw material of Paper, as compared with the perfected product of Books, withdraws that amount from the fund for the payment of Authorship.

I am publishing at a very low price a book of extensive circulation—'Half Hours with the Best Authors.' I sell 20,000 copies, at the rate of three halfpence for a sheet of twenty-four octavo pages. I sell at a profit, because, with the exception of my own editorial labour, I have gathered my 'Half Hours' from the great storehouse of our national literature. I have invaded no copyright; in the comparatively few selections from living writers I have had their permission or

* For a more distinct view of the operation of the Paper Duty see the subjoined Table, page 8.

TABLE of the Comparative Effect of the PAPER TAX on the Cost of various Publications.

TITLE OF WORK.	Number Printed.	Sheets.	Reams.	Weight per Ream.	Total of Duty.	Wholesale Price of Work unbound.	Rate of Duty per Cent.
				lbs.	£.	£.	
1. Modern Novel, 3 vols.	1,000	36	72	22	10	800	1¼
2. Macaulay's History, 2 vols.	35,000	72	5,040	23	756	36,750	2
3. Quarterly Review, 1 number	10,000	18	360	20	47	2,000	2⅜
4. Standard Library, 1 vol.	6,000	15	180	24	28	600	4¾
5. National Shakspere, 6 vols.	5,000	240	2,400	23	360	7,000	5⅐
6. National Cyclopædia, 12 vols.	20,000	384	14,400	20	2,040	30,000	7
7. Penny Cyclopædia, 29 vols.	1,000	970	1,940	35	436	6,000	7¼
8. Household Words, 1 vol.	50,000	26	2,600	36	605	7,250	8⅓
9. Half-Hours, complete	20,000	52	2,080	30	416	4,200	10
10. Working Man's Friend, 1 vol.	100,000	13	2,600	25	426	3,546	12
11. Chambers' Papers, 1 vol.	40,000	8	640	32	133	840	16
12. Catalogue of Exhibition, 1851	500,000	20	20,000	21	2,750	16,333	17

their approval in nearly every case: but yet the authorship has not been a charge upon the work. This is one of the cases in which extreme cheapness may subsist with the Paper Duty. But suppose I were to determine to continue this work, upon the same plan, and at the same price to the public, but engaging Original Writers for its production. Out of my returns I must pay the Paper Duty, and I must pay the Authorship. A single copy of the complete 'Half Hours' will weigh $3\frac{5}{8}$ lbs., upon which the Duty paid is Sixpence, as near as may be. If the Paper Duty were repealed, I should have a reserved fund of 125*l.* upon a sale of 5000 copies; of 250*l.* upon a sale of 10,000; and of 500*l.* upon a sale of 20,000. Does this Tax, then, withdraw the amount of the duty from the fund for the payment of Authorship, or does it not? The Author-fund is the Labour-fund. There is no case in which the State oppressively taxes a raw material that it does not in the same degree impoverish the Labour-fund. In the case of the Continuation of 'Half Hours,' that would demand a large payment for Copyright, and a large payment for Tax, am I answered when I am told to raise the price of the book? If I raise the price of the Continuation, as compared with its predecessor that has not paid Copyright, I incur the risk—indeed I am certain—greatly to diminish the demand. "The rise of price," says Mr. John Mill, "occasioned by the Tax almost always checks the demand for the commodity; and since there are many improvements in production which, to make them practicable, require a certain extent of demand, such improvements are obstructed, and many of them prevented altogether."

2. *That this Tax, which, in its effects upon cheap literature, has been shown to be excessive, operates against the extension of the best English Authorship; and*

interferes with the improvement of all the Productions of the Press.

A book is a very peculiar species of manufacture. One book is like another, and may be compared relatively to price with another in the number of its pages, the character of its type, the quality of its binding; and of these attributes the least informed may readily judge. But one book is essentially different from another in the quality and the cost of its authorship. A Tax upon any manufactured commodity invariably retards the progress to excellence of that commodity. I speak not only of mere material production, but of the influence of the Tax upon the proper rewards of Invention and Skill. Wonderful as it may seem, the perforated pasteboards required for a very complicated pattern in the Jacquard loom have cost 270*l.*, upon which the duty amounts to 92*l.* 15*s.* Who can doubt that a large amount of the Tax falls upon the Designer of the Pattern? In the same way, but greater in degree, the Tax upon Paper, being a very high Tax upon the Profits of the Producer, especially when he aims at a large sale to the greatest number, operates as a Tax upon the original labour—that of the Author. It withdraws so much from the fund out of which his labour is to be remunerated. But in a great number of instances it does more. It excludes the original writer who has the necessary qualities for an extensive influence upon the opinions of the people—upon their intelligence and their morality—from the literary market altogether. I hold that it is one great impediment to the Diffusion of Knowledge. I affirm that it tells with a force which is not to be measured by "Threehalfpence a pound" upon a due provision of original Books for Schools, for Mechanics' Institutes, for Parochial Libraries, for the Home Reading of the Middle and Working Classes. I maintain that it narrows the demand for Literary Labour, by compelling many of the best intellects to turn aside from the duty

and the pleasure of addressing the greatest number of readers. If "the bent of civilisation be to make *good* things cheap," it prevents this development of civilisation in the best of civilisers—books, by rendering extreme cheapness, and the highest excellence, in many cases incompatible. Let me illustrate these assertions again by my own experience.

At the beginning of 1851 I shall have completed 'The National Cyclopædia,' in 12 volumes. Had this book not been founded upon 'The Penny Cyclopædia,' upon the copyright of which book I expended 36,000*l.*, I could not have paid less for the copyright than 10,000*l.* As it is, having my original materials to work upon, I have paid 4000*l.* for revision and abridgment. From the high character of the original work, and the cheapness of this condensed and revised Cyclopædia, I was certain of a large and permanent sale. If there had been no Paper Duty I should have saved more than 2000*l.* paid as Tax, which would have constituted a fund for the payment of new authorship. I have announced a 'Supplement' or 'Companion' to the National Cyclopædia, which will consist of a Series of Treatises on Scientific, Industrial, and Social Progress. To produce this work as it ought to be produced, I must endeavour to procure the assistance of the best minds in the country—of the most eminent professors in every department of knowledge. Assume that this work will in quantity be equal to a third of 'The National Cyclopædia,' or four volumes,—I cannot secure such assistance under an expenditure of 2000*l.* In that case I must sell at least 25,000 copies to cover my outlay. Such a risk "must give us pause." I have deferred the commencement of this important book until I see if the Government contemplate a repeal of the Paper Duty in the next Session of Parliament; for if I print 25,000 copies of this book, I shall use 6400 reams of paper, weighing 20 lbs. and paying a duty of 2*s.* 7½*d.* per ream, increased by the

duty upon the covers, whether paper or milled board, to 2*s.* 9*d.* a ream. Here then is a burden of 880*l.* imposed upon this undertaking. Remove the burden of the 880*l.* and I should have little hesitation in carrying out my idea. My risk in the greatest original expenditure, the copyright, would be reduced to 300*l.* per volume, instead of being 500*l.* per volume.

But suppose I should hold it my interest to go further —not to put the saved Tax directly into my pocket, but to make my book more valuable, and therefore more extensively in demand, by adding the 880*l.* to my original estimate of the sum to be paid for copyright— by paying 700*l.* per volume instead of 500*l.* The inevitable improvement and consequent popularity of my book might diminish my risk to a greater degree than the saving of the amount of the Tax. If I would have the very highest assistance, I must show my sense of its worth by the most liberal payment. The Paper Duty adds nothing to the value of my book. The readers cannot receive any benefit from this large item of expenditure. But if I am relieved from the Paper Duty, I have a fund in reserve which will enable me to ask the highest in scientific knowledge and in literary accomplishment for their invaluable aid. If Sir John Herschel would receive what Sir Charles Wood might be pleased to remit to me, my project would be comparatively safe. The Fund out of which I could produce an unequalled book, by an extraordinary payment to the highest class of authors—the Fund by which I could benefit my countrymen as much as by any educational grant—is in the hands of Parliament. Will Parliament let me wisely use it for the Public advantage, or will it continue to demand it as a small item to swell the Excise, in the same return with the impost upon Gin?

And this consideration of the improvement that I might be enabled to make in one book, through the remission of the Paper Duty, suggests the obvious in-

ference that such remission would afford a fund for the improvement of all books and all productions of the Press whatever. Take the case of an established school-book, published at a very low price—printed continuously from Stereotype Plates—and mainly holding its ground by a sort of prescription. The Proprietors, often a number of Partners, are satisfied with their profits. They are unwilling to risk a temporary surrender of profits, by employing a skilful author to re-edit their book, and by sacrificing their stereotype plates. But they pay 1000*l.* a year for Paper, of which the Tax is at least 200*l.* The Tax is repealed. They save 200*l.* a year. The saving is not sufficient to allow of a reduction in the price of the book; but it is a great encouragement to the improvement of its quality. If the Proprietors are wise, that improvement would be made without delay. Would the public be benefited or not by the remission of the Tax in this example of a very general case?

By parity of reasoning it would not be difficult to prove, in detail, that many of the 160 London Newspapers, the 232 English Provincial Newspapers, the 90 Scotch Newspapers, and the 117 Irish Newspapers —especially Provincial Papers—would be enabled to effect improvements in the amount and character of their intelligence, if they were freed from the Paper Duty. The Newspapers of the United Kingdom consume 90 million sheets of paper annually, upon which they pay Stamp Duty. I estimate that of each sheet, taking the large with the small, 10 sheets go to a pound. The Newspapers therefore pay the Duty upon 9 million pounds of paper, which Duty amounts to 56,250*l.* The remission of the Duty might not lower the price of the individual papers, but it would constitute a fund for the improvement of Newspapers; and in the present general advance of knowledge, it would possibly create a demand for higher literary assistance.

Let me offer one more illustration—an isolated instance—of the Tax interfering with the Fund for the payment of Authorship, and with the consequent perfection of a Book. The Royal Commissioners for the Exhibition of 1851 put up their Catalogue to competition; and 3200*l.* have been given for the right of publishing it by the Contractors, with the additional payment to the Commission of 2*d.* for every copy sold of the Shilling Catalogue. The larger Catalogue, which is to consist of several volumes, is included in this Contract. If half a million copies of the Shilling Catalogue shall be sold (not an unreasonable expectation), the Paper consumed, at the weight prescribed in the contract, will amount to 420,000 lbs., upon which the Duty will cost 2750*l.*, or very nearly threehalfpence upon every Catalogue. If the Commissioners, or the Contractors, had been released from this payment, the Catalogue would not have been sold at less than a shilling; but there would have been a Fund, in the hands of some one, for employing the most skilled labour in the production of a Book which will demand the utmost nicety of technical knowledge. Great as the risk run by the Contractors, they may probably employ this labour; but assuredly the Fund for its employment is eaten away by the Tax.

3. *That it diminishes the Author's Profits to the lowest point, and substitutes for useful English works invasions of Foreign Copyrights, or encourages the production of inferior and injurious works by unskilled labourers in literature.*

The Commerce of Books being essentially one of Risk, there is a very usual mode of diminishing the Risk to the Publisher, by postponing the payment to the Author, in an Agreement for Division of Profits. The most common Agreement of this nature is known

as an Agreement for Half-Profits — the Author advancing Capital in the form of his mental labour—the Publisher advancing Capital in the form of Paper, Printing, Binding, and Advertising.

One of the most remarkable developments of cheapness in books has taken place within the last two or three years. Wherever there is a railway station, we find the shelves of the newspaper-vender filled with Shilling Volumes, known as 'The Parlour Library,' 'The Popular Library,' 'The Railway Library,' 'The Shilling Series,' &c. &c. My 'Weekly Volume,' sold at a Shilling, originated this plan of publication. But I could not attempt any rate of cheapness approaching to the present rate, because I paid a considerable sum for the copyright of every volume. These new Libraries are, with rare exceptions, reprints of American works, or of novels of which the copyright has expired. They furnish scarcely any encouragement whatever to English authorship. It is easy to foresee that the public, having got into the habit of purchasing this class of books, to the great damage of the circulating libraries, will not rest content with American piracies; and will begin to inquire whether our native authors cannot write as well, and become as popular, as the Washington Irvings, and Pauldings, and Coopers of the New World. With such an impulse we will assume that an Author of ability engages in the adventure of producing such a Shilling Volume, upon the principle of Half-Profits. Few authors of reputation would be attracted to experiment upon this mode of publication for a work in manuscript; but for a book that had been successful in a previous edition the adventure might not be wholly discouraging, under certain conditions.

The Shilling Volume of these smart libraries ordinarily consists of from 224 to 248 pages. It is sold in boards (upon which duty is also paid), and weighs from nine to ten ounces. The publisher receives eightpence

per copy, as the wholesale price. With every exertion of economy, it is impossible these books can be produced under sixpence per copy, for the paper, press-work, and binding. The composition and stereotyping will cost at least 40*l.*; so that upon an impression of 10,000 copies the publisher will expend sevenpence per copy, leaving a profit of 12½ per cent.; if he sell the whole impression, a profit only of about 40*l.* It is pretty clear that he is not in a condition to pay for authorship; and that, in point of fact, he will not so pay, except in very rare cases. But he may risk a new book, even by an unknown author; or he may reprint a book of reputation, in this cheapest of forms—upon the principle of Half-Profits. If he sell 10,000, he will have to pay the Author 20*l.*; but upon the first 10,000 he will have cleared the composition and stereotyping; and upon 20,000 the Author's share will be 60*l.*; if he sell 30,000, 100*l.* This would be a large success.

But of the first 10,000 copies, each weighing about 10 oz., the Paper and Milled-board Duty amounts to 40*l.* With untaxed Paper, therefore, the Author's share of Profits would be 40*l.* upon the first 10,000, instead of 20*l.* Upon 20,000 his share of Profits would be 100*l.* instead of 60*l.* Upon 30,000 copies his share of Profits would be 160*l.* instead of 100*l.* It operates in the same degree upon the Publisher's Profits. It taxes the Profits 100 per cent. in the first stage of the undertaking—the sale of 10,000; which sale would afford a Profit of 25 per cent. if there were no Paper Duty. It thus "diminishes the Author's profits to the lowest point." But how does it "substitute, for useful English works, invasions of Foreign Copyrights?" I must examine this point somewhat in detail.

Amongst the anomalies of English Law one of the most startling is, that an Alien has no Copyright in England, although his book may have been originally published here. It has resulted from this decision that

the whole range of American Literature has been explored by English Publishers, for the purpose of producing books upon which there will be no charge for Authorship. This is a retaliation upon the American Publishers, who have long made these predatory excursions into the wider field of English Copyright. Unquestionably the interests of the Authorship of each Country are seriously damaged by these practices. But I must view the mischief of the Paper-Duty, without mixing it up with the question of the more glaring evil of the want of an International Law of Copyright between two countries using the same language. I must take the Law as it stands.

I will assume that an English Author of high character has published a book in an expensive form—beautifully printed—illustrated by the first artists—altogether a luxurious book. It has had a considerable sale, and a wide reputation. It has greatly contributed to render the subject upon which it treats one of general interest. An American Author, stimulated perhaps by this very book, produces a similar work in his own country. An English publisher seizes—it may be two or three English publishers seize—upon the American Copyright, knowing that the subject is popular, however treated, and that the English Copyright has not been produced in a cheap form. The English Author sees his natural market, amongst the purchasers of cheap books, invaded by a book of which the Authorship has cost nothing in this country.* He applies to his Publisher to bring out a cheap edition. He is unwilling that his book should be shut out from the knowledge

* Of the thousands who have seen, on the railway stall, 'Oliver Goldsmith, a Biography, by Washington Irving,' how many know of the existence of 'The Life and Adventures of Oliver Goldsmith, a Biography, by John Forster'? And yet Washington Irving, in the preface to his 'Biography,' says that "Mr. Forster had produced a biography of the poet, executed with a spirit, a feeling, a grace, and an eloquence" that made him think it "presumption"

of the great body of our countrymen; and he names a very moderate sum for the right of printing a very large edition. The rival no-copyright book is in the field; it is published in the East and it is published in the West. The offer of the Author is liberal—it is tempting; but it is not accepted. The Public are not just enough to discriminate between the greater price that ought to be involved in the payment for Copyright, and the lower price that is attainable when there is no such payment. The Publisher must sell the Copyright book as cheap as the no-Copyright book, or the demand will be very unequal. He cannot risk the payment of Copyright, and sell as cheap as the non-payers.

But suppose that no Paper-Duty existed. Upon one of these popular Shilling Volumes the Paper-Duty, we have seen, operates as an item in the cost of production to the extent of 4*l.* per 1000. If a Publisher could produce 25,000 copies at a reduction of 100*l.* from the original cost of material, he may have an equivalent, or an approach to it, for the sum which the English Author has asked for a large edition—an edition of that number. But will not his competitors have, *pari passu*, the same advantage in the reduction? It is true. But they will not have a monopoly, as the Publisher of the English Copyright has. They will compete against themselves more than against him. If they were to lower the price of their no-Copyright book to the extent of their gain by the remission of the duty, they would lower it from a shilling to elevenpence. Such a reduction would not influence one customer in a thousand: and they will not make it. But the reduction of the Duty upon a large sale would enable the Copyright Publisher to compete

in himself "to undertake the subject after it had been thus felicitously treated." The subject "thus felicitously treated" is now presented to many thousands of English readers by one who has come after Mr. Forster as an imitator—and has thus necessarily produced a book every way inferior to the wise, genial, and amusing original.

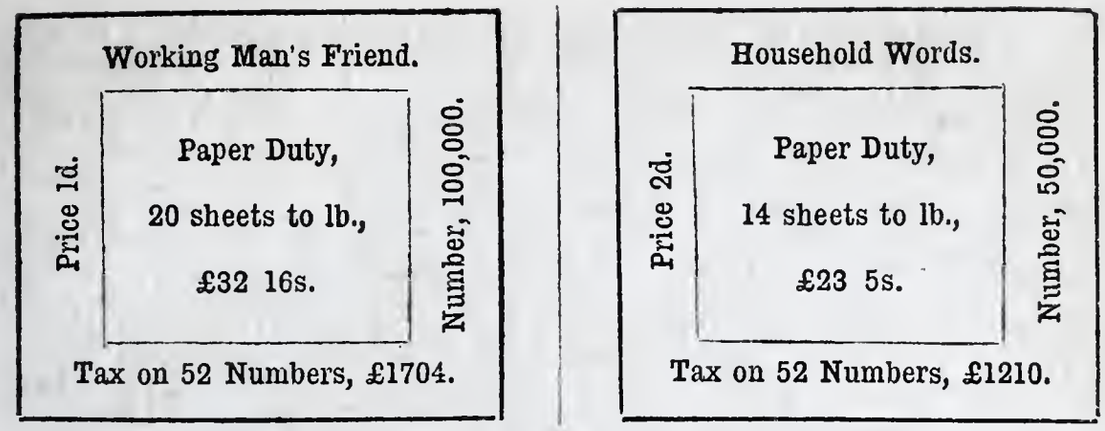
with the no-Copyright Publishers, who are competing amongst themselves. They cannot compete with him in the public appreciation of the book. The English Author has the decided advantage of the Alien. The probability is that they will retire from the contest. If the remission of the Tax were to call up more competition amongst the invaders of Copyright, their condition would be still worse. The field would soon be cleared for the English Author, whose property cannot be invaded.

In the case I have thus stated I concede that the remission of the Duty would be a *bonus* to the non-payers of Copyright; but it would be a much greater proportionate encouragement to original Authors, and to those Publishers who are purchasers of Copyright. Mr. Bohn would benefit far more from its relief in his admirable 'Standard Library' than in his very questionable adventure of American reprints. In the same manner that, in this 'Standard Library,' books that were dear in their first issue have been republished at a very cheap rate, (the point of profit being calculated upon five or six thousand copies,) so there are many valuable Copyrights from which the Authors would derive an interest from a mode of publication addressed to the largest number of readers, after the original sale to a small number had altogether ceased. The Paper Duty stands in the way.

I have now reached the last point which I have to investigate—whether the Paper Tax "encourages the production of inferior and injurious works by unskilled labourers in literature."

The argument which I have used in the instance of the piracies of Foreign Copyrights, which cost nothing, applies in principle to the low class periodical works and books, of which the native Authorship is paid exactly what it is worth. Many mischievous publications exist with the Paper Duty, while many useful ones are annihilated. Incurring no expense of Author-

ship, or giving a very low price for the commonest drudgery, they pay their expenses, or afford a profit, with a very small circulation. Many of them are mere printers' jobs, carried on without any of the ordinary expenses of a regular printing-office—employing no skilled compositors or intelligent readers—printed upon the very worst paper, with worn-out type. Many of the Penny Sheets, whose evil influence is so justly deplored, continue to be sold throughout the country, and are attractive from their very ignorance and vulgarity; but half a dozen of such publications may not equal the number distributed of one honest and improving journal. Of the higher cheap periodical works, and of the better class of cheap original books, the Titles are comparatively few. But with a liberal payment for the best Authorship; with good paper, with careful printing, which also involves skilled labour; with the heavy cost of Stereotyping to meet a continuous demand while the trashy publications are essentially ephemeral, —they must each sell very largely to be remunerative. This condition of their success renders it necessary to measure the continued operation of the Paper Duty upon each of them by thousands of pounds, instead of by hundreds, or fractions of hundreds, as in the other class of low-priced works. If the Paper Tax were a direct Tax upon Books, in the form of a Paper-Duty Stamp—although such a mode of taxation would be far less injurious to Literature than the present impost—it would be annihilated, without any sympathy with the Exchequer, by the force of public opinion. The Nation would not endure a *direct* Tax, heavy in the exact proportion in which the work of public instruction was carried on most extensively and most beneficially. Let us see how a Duty levied upon Cheap Weekly Publications, at the rate of the present Tax, and assessed upon a Printer's return of the number worked off, would look upon a Stamp on the first page of every number:—



It is easy to affirm, and it may appear paradoxical to deny, that the advantage of the repeal of the Duty, being a saving of fourteen guineas upon a ton of Printing Paper, would be equal to such a low-class publication as, in a former pamphlet, I have called 'The Sewer,' and to one of a high class, such as I have called 'The Fountain.' But does the operation of the Duty prevent the existence of many publications, designed to gratify a low taste, and administer to popular ignorance; and does it not prevent the existence, or interfere with the success, of works that seek to stimulate a healthful curiosity, and raise the standard of morals and intelligence? Let us hear what Mr. Robert Chambers said upon this subject, at a Public Dinner at Edinburgh, on the 4th December instant:—"The Miscellany of Tracts, published by his firm, was closed as non-remunerative with a steady sale of 80,000; while it was calculated that this work, up to the end of last year, had paid 6220*l.* of duty. Now, had not this money been taken by the Government, we might have been advised to continue the work. There was a business stopped which distributed 18,000*l.* a year in the employment of labour and the profits of retail trade—there was an organ of intelligence and morality for the people of this country closed by the Government, as effectually as if they had sent the police to break the presses. To illustrate this matter further, we have since set a-going a similar work, but at 1½*d.* a sheet, and on a somewhat more ambitious principle as to the grade of subjects and style of treatment. Driven from the penny field by the Paper Duty, we try that of threehalfpence.

But of this series of sheets the sale is under one-half of the former. The higher price appears to be the chief cause why the sale is thus restricted. The work, we trust, does a great deal of good; all pure and well-meant literature must do so. As the profit, however, is but small, this work may perhaps have to be given up also."

If we are compelled to assume that a corrupting class of cheap publications will always be in some demand, the argument is strengthened for the relief of those publications whose tendency is to furnish something better than what is corrupting. It is a fortunate circumstance that the most popular things in all literature must be essentially based upon the cultivation of the best parts of our intellectual nature—upon the power of rendering sound knowledge attractive, or of stirring the imagination by fictitious narrative or description that is pleasurable in proportion to its purity and truth. There is really no permanent power in literature but what is universal—and there is nothing universal that is tainted with the desire to gratify a morbid taste in any class of readers, be they high or low. But what is essentially excellent cannot be produced without large cost; and being so produced, and sold at a rate of cheapness that is almost compelled by the cheapness of the baser commodity, it is evident that, if an impost of the State runs parallel with the outlay for the higher Authorship, the baser commodity, being produced at less expense, is better enabled to bear the impost. To pay for the higher Authorship a higher price must be charged to the consumer. The demand is, then, narrowed; and all the fixed expenses, of Authorship and of skilled Printing, fall more heavily upon each thousand sold. Messrs. Chambers ventured upon the lower price, and the 'Miscellany' was "closed as non-remunerative."

I conscientiously believe, then, that the Paper Duty operates as a Premium upon noxious publications, chiefly because, as in the cases mentioned by Mr. Chambers,

the discouraging effect of the Tax interferes with the publication of many books and periodical works, and the increased circulation of many in existence, which would raise, or are raising, the standard of popular taste. Who can doubt that the standard has been wonderfully raised during the last twenty years? Who can doubt that there are millions of readers amongst what we call the Working Classes, who can only be addressed by writers who have something of valuable knowledge to impart, or who possess the skill of clothing what is common with a new grace and interest? For them the low ribaldry—the exciting and corrupting stories—that are manufactured in printing-garrets, and appear to superficial observers to be the literature of the people—have no charm. They seldom come within their observation; for in the sale of cheap Weekly Sheets there is a marked distinction in the class of vendors; and 'The Sewer' will not be found on the same counter as 'The Fountain.' But to thrust out the noxious publications, the supply of the higher class must be abundant; the quality of the writing must be of the best,—for to write well for the People is the rarest of literary qualifications; lastly, the price must as nearly as possible approach to the cost of the mischievous production. Whatever interferes with the circulation of the higher periodicals by increasing their price —whatever tends to render a false economy necessary, by lowering their payment for the best literary labour—interferes with one of the most important instruments of National Education, using the term in its highest sense.

The question that must press upon the mind of a conscientious legislator, not looking at this large subject as one of fiscal importance only, is this: Would the repeal of the Paper Duty, operating as an encouragement to *all* Cheap Publications, most multiply, and forward the dissemination, of the bad and the ignorant, or of the useful and intelligent publications? The

answer is very brief, and it involves no technicality. The Duty is an impediment to the sale of both classes of works; but inasmuch as the Duty greatly diminishes the fund which might otherwise go to the literary improvement of the works which are produced at the lowest rate of expenditure for authorship, a large proportion of the whole quantity circulated of cheap publications is necessarily kept in a state of degradation proportioned to the quality of the unskilled and badly paid labour employed in their production. If the taste of the purchasers of the lowest-priced publications were to be measured by the character of some of these publications, it would be low indeed. But the mere quality of cheapness has much to do with the extension of the demand for them; and with equal cheapness, or an approach to it, amongst the better class of works, the number of those readers who could appreciate what is intelligent without dulness, and amusing without ribaldry, would outrun, far more than at present, those who would cleave to the ignorant and corrupting. There might be a hope, even, that the larger command of Capital, which would be a consequence of the repeal of the Paper Duty, would produce a competition amongst some of the lowest-priced publications for a better quality of writing, morally and intellectually. At any rate there would be an impulse to the exertions of those who are now giving the better quality, but are struggling against the cost of Authorship and the cost of Duty. They would move on with comfort and steadiness when relieved from the fiscal burthen. In good time the literature of the many might be purified, as effectually as the literature of the few has been purified, by higher tastes and sounder morals than characterised a past age. Our success would not be doubtful if the Government were on our side.

London, January 1, 1851.

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